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SUBJECT: AT THE UN, RAISING EYEBROWS: A NONTRADITIONAL
OPENING OF THE 63RD SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

REF: FAX USUN-IO/UNP (9/17)

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro Wolff for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: UN General Assembly (GA) President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann opened the 63rd Session of the GA on September 16. Despite the tradition of a short, pro forma opening speech and calls for cooperation and solidarity, d'Escoto used his fifty-minute speech to level a series of direct and mildly-veiled verbal jabs at the United States and UN Security Council members. He outlined the priorities for his presidency: democratization of the United Nations (i.e., strengthening the GA vis-a-vis the Security Council); addressing hunger, poverty and rising food and oil prices; and a number of other high-profile global challenges such as global warming and terrorism. After the speech, the GA approved the appointment of nine members to its Credentials Committee. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) On September 16, new UN General Assembly President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann opened the 63rd session of the GA flanked in the hall by his hand-chosen advisors for the year, including Nicaragua's Norman Miranda (Chef de Cabinet) and Magda Enriquez-Beitler (Senior Advisor). Indirectly, President d'Escoto accused the United States and Europe of controlling the IMF and World Bank and using them as "instruments of domination," and bemoaned the "unjust and universally repudiated" U.S. embargo against Cuba. Beyond the references to the United States, d'Escoto criticized Security Council members for perpetrating "serious breaches of the peace and threats to international peace and security," and claimed that unilateral "wars of aggression," including those waged in the name of democracy, are "the worst form of terrorism imaginable."

¶3. (U) True to earlier statements that this will be a different kind of session, he presented two live folk-song performances by Peter, Paul and Mary member Peter Yarrow and a multimedia presentation urging unity among GA members to address hunger, poverty, global warming and rising food prices. In what is usually a meeting to manage Assembly housekeeping items, d'Escoto's speech entitled, "Another World is Possible," went for 50 minutes (with no applause interruptions) and outlined his priorities for the 63rd session of the GA (Ref Fax).

¶4. (U) D'Escoto dedicated his presidency to "the dispossessed of the world," and used language colored by spiritual and philosophical overtones to lament both the state of global affairs and the relative insignificance of the GA. Citing the "lack of democracy in the UN" as one of the reasons the world is in a "deplorable state" today, d'Escoto listed democratization of the UN as his "central and overarching objective" during the 63rd session. To that end, he announced plans to hold a High-level Dialogue on the Democratization of the United Nations, to be held in three five-day sessions (dates not announced). The first session would focus on enhanced coordination between the UNGA and the UN Economic and Social Committee and the Bretton Woods organizations and other financial institutions. The second

session of the Dialogue would explore ways to revitalize and empower the GA, in part by re-appropriating power "wrongly accumulated" in the Security Council, Bretton Woods institutions and in the UN bureaucracy, d'Escoto said. The third session would focus on reform of the Security Council.

¶15. (U) The 63rd session would also seek to address global hunger, poverty and high oil and food prices, including the root causes of these issues, d'Escoto continued. The GA President noted his plan to build solidarity among GA members to tackle the causes of these "global crises," including issues such as agricultural subsidies, environmental impacts upon food production and the "problematic development model pushed upon developing countries" by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Climate change; water availability; terrorism and human rights; nuclear control and disarmament; trafficking in persons; the Palestinian situation; humanitarian assistance; and, gender equality will also be focal points of the 63rd session, d'Escoto stated.

¶16. (U) Following the speech, the GA approved the appointment of nine members (Botswana, China, Cyprus, The United States, Russia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Mozambique, and Saint Kitts and Nevis) to its Credentials Committee.

¶17. (C) COMMENT: In contrast to the traditionally short, pro forma opening address, the new GA President's speech included a number of direct and mildly-veiled jabs at UN Security Council members, explicitly naming the United States twice. These provided some of the few occasions when his pedantic delivery became somewhat animated. Despite his calls for unity and solidarity and promises to look forward, d'Escoto is off to a bad start. END COMMENT.

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